

Philip Perry, *Essay on the Life and Manners of Robert Grosseteste*, edited by Jack. P. Cunningham, Woodbridge: Catholic Record Society: Record Series Volume 89, The Boydell Press, 2022, pp. 1 + 247, £50.00/\$75.00, ISBN: 978-0-902832-34-3

Philip Perry (1720-74) was a Catholic priest and scholar. From a Staffordshire Catholic family, he was educated at the English College at Douai and St Gregory's English College in Paris. He was ordained priest in 1751 and obtained his doctorate in theology in 1754. In 1767, Perry was appointed rector of the English College of St Alban, Valladolid, Spain, and although his duties there proved time-consuming, he none the less undertook historical research on a range of subjects. *Inter alia*, he prepared a life of Robert Grosseteste, the thirteenth-century bishop of Lincoln. After Perry's death, this and other manuscripts were returned to Britain. This volume, edited by Jack P. Cunningham, is the first publication of the 'Essay' on Grosseteste.

Grosseteste (c.1170-1253) was, of course, a quite remarkable man. One towering modern interpreter, Sir Richard Southern, summarized his career enthusiastically: 'scientist, theologian, and bishop of Lincoln, [he] combined a very humble origin with torrential energy, great ability, and a rarely paralleled breadth of intellectual interests'.¹ Given such distinction, that Grosseteste fascinated Perry is unsurprising. But, in the two centuries following the Reformation, Grosseteste's life excited some religious controversy. The reason for this is indicated by the Victorian stained-glass window in Lincoln Cathedral reproduced on the volume's cover: it shows Grosseteste remonstrating with the Pope about abuses in the curia. That clash, and other 'evidence', allowed Protestants to claim the Bishop as a proto-Protestant; and Perry endeavoured to refute the identification.

Perry entitled his study an 'Essay on the life and manners of the venerable Robert Grossetete [*sic*], Bishop of Lincoln, from his own works and from contemporary Writers'. In preparation, he had read widely and painstakingly; the works cited by him are listed on pp. 231-4 of this edition. Perry organized the material into four books, each containing short chapters. He had no doubt as to Grosseteste's greatness: the Bishop was variously 'our heroe', '[o]ur most meek Prelate', 'our judicious Prelate', 'our active Prelate', 'our penetrating Prelate', 'our generous Prelate', '[o]ur intrepid Prelate', and 'our strenuous and patriot Prelate'. Therefore one object of the 'Essay', Perry stated in his Preface,

¹R. W. Southern, 'Grosseteste, Robert (c.1170-1253)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn September 2004 [<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11665>. Accessed 10 August 2022]

was ‘to rescue the memory of so great and good a man from oblivion’ (p. 6).

Perry further noted in the Preface that he aimed to produce ‘a full [...] picture of [...] Grosseteste] as far as the materials which are left of him will go’ (*ibid.*). That was no easy task, for, as Perry observed, those materials were ‘scattered up and down in different authors’, requiring contraction to a ‘plain and orderly narration’ (*ibid.*). One of the pleasures of this volume is observing the author’s diligent historical reconstruction highlighted by his criticism of sources (e.g. pp. 123, 189), weighing of different accounts (e.g. pp. 79, 189-90), and his zeal to correct others’ errors (e.g. pp. 63, 183). Perry modestly claimed that he hoped an ‘abler pen’ might improve on his study. Nevertheless, he maintained that his work was a ‘faithfull sketch’ (p. 7).

Perry’s sharpest criticisms were reserved for interpretations which, in his eyes, resulted solely from confessional quarrels. The Anglican Edward Brown (*d.* 1698/99) had praised Grosseteste, seeing him as a proto-Reformer and opponent of the Papacy. Perry castigated the supposed misrepresentations of ‘the peevish doctor’ Brown, sometimes pungently (‘it’s evident to any Reader, that is not stark blind [...]’) (pp. 48, 79). Grosseteste’s ‘opposing the Pope [in particular matters], is enough with Browne to make him a good Protestant’, snorted Perry, powerfully placing his refutation at the work’s end (p. 203). Yet Perry could admire Protestant scholars. He described the Anglican Henry Wharton (1664-95), whose *Anglia Sacra* (1691) he used, as ‘a very knowing Protestant and one that has scarce had his fellow in English Ecclesiastical knowledge’ (p. 5).

Perry seemingly hoped to publish the ‘Essay’, confident that it would ‘not be displeasing to the curious Reader’ (p. 7). So why did he not do so? Dr Cunningham argues that since, with Jacobitism’s demise, anti-Catholicism was diminishing in George III’s Britain, the work’s publication risked endangering the improved Protestant-Catholic relations which yielded (after Perry’s death) the Catholic Relief Acts. Indeed, Bishop Richard Challoner feared that (and other disputes). Protestant hackles might certainly be raised by Perry’s emphasis on papal power and comments on good works, relics, miracles, the invocation of angels, and transubstantiation. A particular mine-field was Crown-church/papal relations — Perry carefully described Grosseteste’s conflicts with the Crown. Of course, Perry might have published the ‘Essay’ had he lived longer. His death, of a fever contracted during a heatwave, was unexpected.

Dr Cunningham has edited three volumes of papers on Grosseteste. Here he provides a valuable introduction examining Perry’s life, Protestant interpretations of Grosseteste’s career and Perry’s responses to them, and Perry’s arguments in favour of the Bishop’s canonization. He supplies detailed notes elucidating contexts and problematical

points, commenting on Perry's sources, and drawing attention to errors in the 'Essay'. In addition, he includes a useful appendix containing short biographies of the principal figures treated. The volume dovetails with Dr Cunningham's ongoing project to publish new editions of Grosseteste's own works. In 2004, Southern wrote that when 'Grosseteste's writings are made available in modern critical editions [...] it] seems likely that [...] he will take his place in the first rank of medieval Englishmen'.² How Perry would have agreed!

This volume will interest readers of *British Catholic History* as a life of a remarkable Catholic ecclesiastic —in Perry's words, 'a perfect scholar [...] an illustrious linguist, poet, orator, philosopher and mathematician, as well as a prime theologist [*sic*], and eminent prelate' (p. 5). But, of greater interest, since the Bishop's career can obviously be investigated in detailed modern accounts, is the historiographical dimension: the distinctive treatment of Grosseteste's life, the reasons why Perry adopted his stance, and the skills which he deployed in writing his 'faithfull sketch'.

Winchester

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Ulrich Lehner and Shaun Blanchard eds., *The Catholic Enlightenment: A Global Anthology*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2021 pp. 304, \$34.95, ISBN: 9780813233987

Readers will no doubt be aware that in recent years one of the growth areas of scholarly enquiry for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been that focused on the Catholic Enlightenment. Two of the leading proponents of this movement have been Ulrich Lehner, (*Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (2016) and Shaun Blanchard (*The Synod of Pistoia and Vatican II* (2020)). Now, as editors, they have brought together a team of ten other scholars, whose efforts have resulted in *The Catholic Enlightenment: A Global Anthology*, which is part of the 'Early Modern Catholic Sources Series' published by the Catholic University of America Press.

The historiography of the Enlightenment traditionally was dominated by the more extreme, secular, anticlerical figures, such as Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire. In reality though there was a middle ground where Christianity, modernity and scientific and scholarly advancement flourished; the editors state in the introduction that Catholic Enlightenment is 'among the oldest claimants for a separate place under the Enlightenment's sun' (p. 2). Yet in spite of this reality,

²*Ibid.*